# Archaeobotanical studies at the Atskouri settlement (SE Georgia, 1st mill BC) - preliminary results

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Site location



Atskouri 2005

This 1st millennium B.C. settlement is located on the right bank of River Mtkvari (ancient Ciros), in the village of Atskouri. This religious and administrative centre of the ancient Samtskhe (South Georgia) was probably connected with the arrival of Apostle Andrew in Georgia, as supported by written sources and archaeological evidence of strong Greek influence. The archaeological investigations, which began in 1988, were aimed at excavating and studying the settlement dating from the pre-Christian period. Six trenches were dug at different locations within the presumed settlement. Cultural layers dated to the 1st millennium BC are covered by a thick (2-4 m) sterile layer of loam as a result of accumulation from the upper strata of the southern slopes of the Meskheti Ridge. The architectural remains are represented by various foundations built with cobblestones and ashlars, allowing the distinction of two different types of structure: one rectangular, the other circular. It should be noted that chronologically, circular structures are characteristic of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., while in the subsequent period only rectangular buildings occur.

Archaeobotanical field work

In 2005 archaeobotanical samples were taken from trench TN6 from the layer with rectangular buildings. Twenty samples of known volume were mixed with water and the floating fraction was poured through sieve with a 0.5 mm mesh. The heavy fraction was sieved with coarser sieve. Ca. 30 litres of soil were processed in total. The material contains both charred and uncharred remains, but the latter are considered to be recent contamination.

**Charred remains**

*Hordeum vulgare* *Hordeum* sp.

*Triticum aestivum* type *Triticum* sp.

*Triticum monococcum*/new (*timopheevi*?)

Fabaceae indet. T1

Fabaceae indet.

cf. *Agrostemma githago*

*Galium sp.*

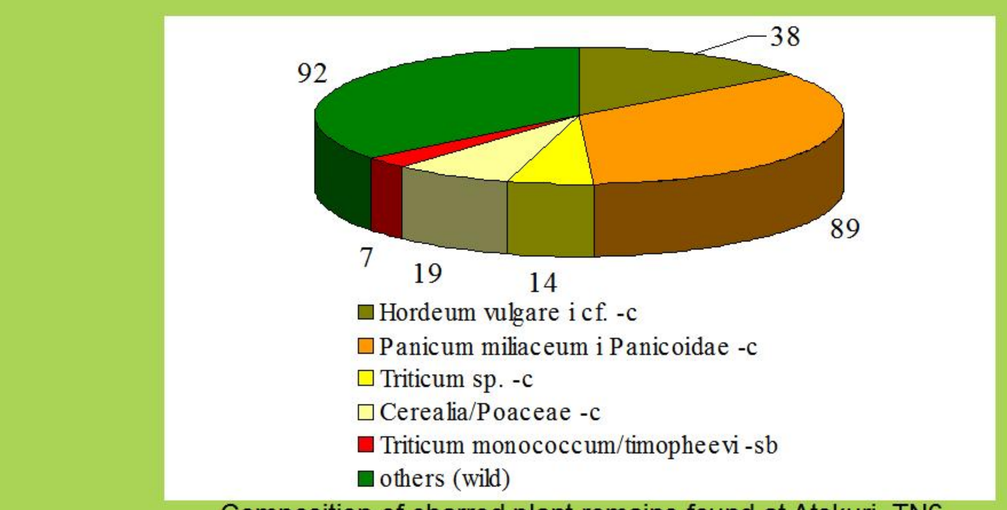
*Hordeum bulbosum/spontaneum*

Malvaceae

*Polycnemum* sp.

Poaceae indet. T2

*Fallopia convolvulus*




Composition of charred plant remains found at Atskuri, TN6

Samples were taken mainly from buildings and their surrounding. The most common are grains of cultivated plants like barley and millet but wheats are also present. A few spikelet basis of glumed wheat were found. They can belong to einkorn.

One pip of grape (*Vitis*) and two fragments of cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*) were also noticed.

In the material also some other, wildgrowing, plants were found. Most of them are still undetermined but some weeds were noticed (cf. *Agrostemma githago*, *Fallopia convolvulus*).

Eight samples were taken from a wall of trench. They contains mainly charcoal. In the sample from the top of the culture layer (0,6 m above currently explored layer), a number of Poaceae (type T2) were noticed. That layer was covered by archaeologically sterile loamy layer.

The study is under way. A detailed identification shall give more information. The site contains archaeobotanical material and farther studies can be performed.

| Name | Number | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Hordeum vulgare i cf. | 38 | 12 |
| Panicum miliaceum | 73 | 10 |
| Panicoide | 16 | 3 |
| Triticum aestivum type | 3 | 3 |
| Triticum monococcum/new (sb) | 7 | 5 |
| Triticum sp. | 7 | 3 |
| cf. Triticum sp. | 4 | 1 |
| cf. Avena sp. | 1 | 1 |
| cf. Secale sp. | 3 | 3 |
| Cerealia indet./Poaceae | 15 | 6 |
| Cornus mas (endocarp) | 2 | 2 |
| Vitis cf. silvestris | 1 | 1 |
| Fabaceae (Vicia/Pisum) | 1 | 1 |
| cf. Agrostemma githago | 1 | 1 |
| Bromus sp. | 1 | 1 |
| Chenopodium album | 7 | 3 |
| Chenopodium hybridum | 1 | 1 |
| Chenopodiaceae indet. | 9 | 4 |
| Fabaceae T1 | 8 | 3 |
| Fallopia convolvulus | 3 | 3 |
| Galium sp. | 4 | 4 |
| cf. Galium | 1 | 1 |
| Hordeum bulbosum/spontaneum | 1 | 1 |
| Lamiaceae indet. (typ Stachys?) | 1 | 1 |
| Malvaceae indet. | 1 | 1 |
| Poaceae T2 | 19 | 1 |
| Poaceae indet. | 14 | 6 |
| Poaceae indet. (small) | 3 | 2 |
| Polycnemum arvense | 3 | 2 |
| Polygonum aviculare | 2 | 2 |
| Veronica sp. | 1 | 1 |
| cf. Fumaria | 1 | 1 |
| cf. Hypericum | 1 | 1 |
| cf. Silene sp. | 2 | 2 |
| cf. Poaceae | 3 | 2 |
| Verbena/Lamiaceae | 1 | 1 |

All pictures of macroremains done by Katarzyna Cywa, all remains are charred, scale bar equals 1 mm